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Law and Order Committee hears report on “Navajo Cops” filming agreement

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Law and Order Committee of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council in their regular meeting on Monday received a report from Navajo Nation Broadcast Services director, Kee Long, on behalf of the Navajo Film Office regarding a filming permit agreement for “Navajo Cops,” a television series that aired on the National Geographic Channel earlier this year.

The Navajo Film Office regulates and oversees all filming, commercial film, and photography on the Navajo Nation. Filming permits are required for entities wishing to film within the nation.

Fees are assessed to process the filming permits, said Long.

According to the film office, permit fees collected from the pilot series filming of “Navajo Cops” has amounted to approximately \$4,400. Monies from permit fees are deposited into the nation’s general fund.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) brought up the issue of Navajo Nation copyright laws and a concern he had with revenue that may potentially be made with the sale of “Navajo Cops” episodes (DVD sales, for example) elsewhere.

Delegate Yazzie inquired as to where potential revenue might be going, expressing that a portion of it should return to law enforcement.

One filming permit still in effect with the show’s major producer, Sam Dolen, expires in November.

When it expires, Dolen is required to submit an expenditure report to the nation outlining all payments that were made throughout the permit period, according to a filming agreement attached to the permit.

In addition, producers must furnish duplicates of the filming product at no cost to the nation.

Long stated that by signing the filming agreements to obtain a permit, the show’s producer agreed to abide by the laws of the Navajo Nation.

For future filming agreements, Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Cornfields, Ganado, Jeddito, Kin Dah Łichíí’, Steamboat) advised that they include stipulations ensuring that the correct image of the Navajo Nation is being projected.

Council Delegate Elmer P. Begay (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone) inquired about the benefits of the show in regard to public safety within the nation and for the Navajo people.

The series enables a wide audience to witness the realities Navajo law enforcement face on a daily basis, said Long, who also provided feedback from viewers recognizing the bravery and valor of Navajo police officers.

The reality show featuring Navajo law enforcement has generated a lot of interest. According to Long, the production company is contemplating a return to film another installment of episodes.

“Overall, the show is a good thing,” said Delegate Yazzie, “we just want to ensure the protection of our Navajo law enforcement.”

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